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## Dioxin is confined, plant exec says

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Tests at Monsanto Co.'s plant in Luling conclude that dioxin found earlier this year in the soil is confined to one area where the herbicide 2,4,5-T was handled 18 years ago, plant manager Vincent E. Boyen said Friday.

Dioxin is considered one of the most toxic man-made chemicals. It was a major ingredient in Agent Orange, a defoliant sprayed by American planes in Vietnam.

Monsanto's tests showed that the area where any dioxin could be found is about 100 feet wide and 300 feet long, Boyen said in a prepared release. More than 80 percent of this area contained less than 10 parts per billion dioxin concentration, he said.

The federal government requires cleanup action for any contaminated site where dioxin exceeds one part per billion.

The affected area at Monsanto's chemical plant is along a section of railroad siding where 2,4,5-T was loaded and unloaded between November 1965 and January 1966.

Sampling for the dioxin was observed by an official from the federal Environmental Protection Agency. Immediately after the sampling, the area was covered with plastic sheeting and shells to prevent the spread of contamination, Boyen said.

Plant officials have discussed the latest test results with state, federal and parish officials, and have informed the plant's 830 workers of the findings, Boyen said.

"We concur in the investigative methods undertaken by Monsanto and will continue to monitor the situation," said Karla Swacker, spokeswoman for the state Department of Natural Resources.

EPA ordered the tests as part of its nationwide survey to identify industrial sites where dioxin was produced or stored and to determine cleanup requirements.

"Dioxin bonds readily to the soil and is not biodegradeable," Swacker said. "It will stay where it is until it is removed and disposed of. Once EPA establishes some disposal guidelines, then the state and Monsanto may take some action at the site to get rid of it."

The latest tests show the dioxin has not moved from the railroad siding where 2,4,5-T was handled, Boyen said.

"Concentrations are essentially limited to the upper 12 inches of soil and drop off sharply away from the loading and unloading section of the siding," he said. "That further validates that dioxin binds itself tightly to the soil and does not migrate."

Dioxin concentrations of less than 10 parts per billion were found in 89 percent of the 28 core samples analysed from 16 locations on and around the rail siding, he said.

The railroad siding along which the dioxin was handled is more than a half mile inside the boundaries of the 1,555-acre plant, which stretches from U.S. 90 to the Mississippi River.

Previous testing showed no dioxin in water samples or in products now made at the plant, Boyen said.

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